



Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines and Policy

**Trinity United Methodist
Church Huntsville, Alabama**

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Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines and Policies

Trinity United Methodist Church - Huntsville, Alabama

Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, *“Whoever welcomes [a] child...welcomes me”* Matthew 18:5. Children and youth are our present and future, hope, teachers, and inspiration.

They are full participants in the church's life and the realm of God.

Jesus also said, *“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”* Matthew 25:40. The

Inclusion of vulnerable people in our community of faith allows us each to see a fuller representation of the Image of God.

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to our children, our youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse” (para. 162C).

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children, youth, and vulnerable people. Sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents devastate all involved: the person, the family, the local church, and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church – 2000, pp. 180-181. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used with permission.)

The North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a Child Protection Policy in June 2003. The North Alabama Conference adopted a policy for Vulnerable persons in June 2014. Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt the following policy for the prevention of abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable persons in our local church.

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing these Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines and Policies and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons in our church.

Statement of Covenant

As caring Christians, we are also committed to protecting and advocating for children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons participating in the life of the church. The church, at all levels of its organization, is entrusted with the responsibility of providing an emotionally and physically safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons, in which they are protected from any form of abuse.

If this commitment is violated, we uphold the ideal that reporting abuse is to witness the world of God's love and justice, and we fully recognize that reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. Simply stated, reporting abuse may help stop existing abuse and prevent further abuse.

Additionally, we are committed to caring for children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons and their families by offering resources that will contribute to healing.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each may be "surrounded by steadfast love, ... established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" ("Baptismal Covenant II," United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44).

Definitions:

Child- A person under age 12

Youth – A person aged 12 to 18 and under

Adult- A person 19 and over

Vulnerable Person – Any person, regardless of age, whose behavior indicates that they are mentally incapable of adequately caring for themselves and their interests without adverse consequences to themselves or others, or who, because of physical or mental impairment, is unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, exploitation, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse by others. (Definition taken from “Adult Protective Services Act of 1976.”. Code (1957) §38-9-2(2), but expanded to include vulnerable children.)

Vulnerable Elderly Person- A person 65 years of age or older is considered elderly. An elderly person shall be considered vulnerable when they exhibit signs of cognitive or physical decline that render them unable to advocate for or protect themselves fully.

Caregiver – An individual who has responsibility for the care of a vulnerable person or a vulnerable elderly person as a result of a family relationship or who has assumed that responsibility voluntarily, by contract, or as a result of the ties of friendship.

Employee – Anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with children, youth, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons.

Volunteer – A person not employed by the church who serves in a leadership role over children, youth, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons, under the church’s care.

Ministry Area Supervisor – An employee with direct responsibility for an area of ministry (i.e., Director of Children’s Ministry, Director of Youth Ministry, Child Development Center Director, Executive Pastor, Director of Missions and Justice, Pastor of Engagement, Director of Discipleship, etc.)

Abuse – Harm or threatened harm to a child’s, youth’s, vulnerable person’s, or vulnerable elderly person’s health or welfare by a person responsible for their health or welfare or by a person in a position of trust, which harm occurs or is threatened through non-accidental physical or mental injury or sexual abuse (26-16-2, Ala. Code 1975).

Sexual abuse –The touching of the sexual or other intimate parts of a child, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons, or any other conduct or action done for the purpose of gratifying the sexual desire of either party either (1) through physical force that overcomes earnest resistance or a threat, express or implied, that places a child, youth or vulnerable person in fear of immediate death or serious physical injury to [themselves] or another person, or (2) by a person 18 years old or older against another who is less than 16 years old, or by a person four or more years older than the victim (13A-6-60, 13A-6-66, Ala. Code 1975). In addition to this, sexual abuse can include non-physical forms, such as sharing or exposing a child, youth, or vulnerable adult to pornography or any sexually explicit media.

Neglect – Harm to a child’s, youth’s, vulnerable person’s, or vulnerable elderly person’s health or welfare by a person responsible for their health or welfare which occurs through negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care (26-16-2, Ala. Code 1975).

Emotional Abuse – The intentional or reckless infliction of emotional or mental anguish, or the use of a physical or chemical restraint, medication, or isolation as punishment or as a substitute for treatment or care of any child, youth, vulnerable person, or vulnerable elderly person.

Exploitation – The expenditure, diminution, or use of the property, assets, or resources of a vulnerable person or a vulnerable elderly person without the express voluntary consent of that person or their legally-authorized representative.

Financial Exploitation – The use of deception, intimidation, undue influence, force, or threat of force to obtain or exert unauthorized control over a vulnerable person's or vulnerable elderly person's property, with the intent to deprive the vulnerable persons or vulnerable elderly persons of that property.

Operational Procedures for Those Working with Children, Youth, Vulnerable Persons, and Vulnerable Elderly Persons

In support of our commitment to the safety and welfare of all children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons and in response to our Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines and Policies, the following are operational procedures for individuals working with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons:

1.0 SELECTION AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

- 1.1 Qualifications. All volunteers with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons shall be active members or participants in the ministries of Trinity for at least six months, defined as attending weekly in-person worship and/or discipleship events at least twice per month on separate days during that period. This requirement shall not apply to employees where supervising children, youth, and/or vulnerable people is included in their job description as approved by the staff-parish relations committee.
- 1.2 Application. All employees and volunteers working with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons regularly or at an overnight event shall complete the applicable employee or volunteer application form, including applicable consents for background checks. The application form includes a covenant where volunteers and employees pledge to uphold this policy. The application and covenant need to be renewed every three years.
- 1.3 Background Checks. All volunteers and employees working directly with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons shall be required to complete a background check to include a Social Security trace, a State of Alabama criminal check, and a national (multi-jurisdictional) criminal check, and a national sex offender registry check (if not part of the national criminal check). Employee requirements are dictated in the Trinity United Methodist Church (UMC) Employee Handbook. A new background check will be run every 3 years for volunteers. The Trinity UMC Employee Handbook dictates the frequency of employee background checks.
- 1.4 Disqualifying and Adverse Background Check Procedure. If a disqualifying background check result is received, the receiving Ministry Area Supervisor will consult with the Executive Pastor to develop a plan to communicate the background check results with the applicant in writing. A copy of the disqualifying report shall be mailed to the applicant or volunteer by certified mail. An applicant with an adverse background check may be prohibited from serving with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons through Trinity UMC, as well as prohibited from driving vehicles with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons. In some cases, those with adverse background check results may be permitted to serve with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons with stipulations. Stipulations will be documented in writing and kept on file.

- 1.5 Training Requirements and Frequency. All employees and volunteers are required to attend a Safe Sanctuaries training at least every 3 years or within 6 months of a change in the church's policy. All employees shall be required to complete Safe Sanctuaries training regardless of whether they are working directly with children, youth, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons. At least once per year, there should be an opportunity for training for new volunteers and employees.
- 1.6 Youth Helpers. In addition to the requirements above, a youth who is a volunteer or employee must also submit a separate consent form from their parent or guardian, confirming that they know no reason why the youth should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with other youth, children, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons. Youth may not work with children, youth, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons without direct **adult** supervision **by a Safe Sanctuary trained adult**, and they do not count towards the two-adult rule (para .2.1).
- 1.7 Vulnerable Persons Helpers. In addition to the requirements above, a vulnerable person who is a volunteer or employee must also submit a separate consent form from their caregiver, confirming that they know of no reason why the person should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with other youth, children, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons. Vulnerable persons and vulnerable elderly persons may not work with children, youth, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons without direct **adult** supervision **by a Safe Sanctuary trained adult**, and they do not count towards the two-adult rule (para .2.1).
- 1.8 Quick Trains. A Ministry Area Supervisor may offer quick training using material from the most recent training to allow new volunteers and employees to begin serving before the next scheduled training. The new employee or volunteer is required to participate in the next scheduled **in-person** training. An application, background check, and covenant must be on file before the volunteer participates in a quick training. Additionally, an effort will be made to establish a pool of potential occasional volunteers who have participated in a Safe Sanctuaries training.
- 1.9 Documentation. Ministry Area Supervisors are responsible for ensuring the completion and documentation of these requirements before an individual begins work in their areas of ministry. Documentation of the completion of these requirements shall be kept in a confidential file maintained by the **Director of Children's Ministry, Director of Youth Ministry, Director of Discipleship** or the Executive Pastor's office.
- 1.10 Recertification. Volunteers who have a break in service of one year or greater, or those who have left the church for any reason, shall be recertified as if they were new volunteers. For those who have remained in active service with children, youth, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons, recertification to include ministry application, background check, and covenant shall be required every three years (para. 1.2, 1.3).

2.0 MINISTRY PROCEDURES

- 2.1 Two Adults. Two (2) non-related and non-cohabitating adults shall be present in any Trinity-sponsored children's, youth, vulnerable persons', or vulnerable elderly persons' activity. This rule shall be accomplished by having either 2 non-related and non-cohabitating adults physically present in classrooms/other settings or by having one adult or family unit present and utilizing a roaming supervisor (para. 2.2). Related and cohabitating adults are welcome to serve together; however, in all cases, they count as one adult. (Note: youth helpers and volunteers who are vulnerable persons or vulnerable elderly persons do not count towards the 2-adult rule.)
- 2.2 Roaming Supervisors. If roaming supervisors are utilized, the following requirements must be met: 1) The individual serving as a roaming supervisor is qualified as a leader for all age groups they supervise. 2) Serving as a roaming supervisor is the individual's only responsibility. 3) The roaming supervisor can see the entirety of rooms for which they are responsible from the hallway (i.e., no rooms are around corners or on different floors). 4) The roaming supervisor has immediate access to enter all rooms for which they are

responsible.

- 2.3 Ratios for Children and Youth. Ratio Minimum for adults: children/youth will be as follows: With Children 0 months through 18 months, a 1:5 ratio is observed. With children 18 months through 2.5 years, a 1:7 ratio is followed. With children and youth 2.5 years through 18 years, a 1:10 ratio is followed. Even when the ratio is met, the 2 adult rule shall be maintained (para 2.1). Roaming supervisors do not count towards ratio adherence (para. 2.2). There are no ratio requirements for vulnerable elderly or vulnerable persons, but the 2 adult rule shall be maintained.
- 2.4 Five-Year Age Span. All adults shall be at least five (5) years older than the children or youth they supervise. Employees who do not meet this requirement may serve as a leader if they are at least 3 years older than the group's oldest member, and supervising youth or children is included in their job description as approved by the staff-parish relations committee. Youth helpers are subject to the 5-year age span procedure (i.e., 12-year-olds can only help with children seven and under).
- 2.5 Ministry Visibility. Ministry with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and/or vulnerable elderly persons can only take place in spaces that maintain clear visibility at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, keeping open doors in classrooms, hospital or nursing home rooms, as well as ensuring that windows in the doors of classrooms are unimpeded by decorations, half-doors in classrooms are to keep the top half of the door open, and adequate lighting in every space is required. Classroom doors are never to be locked when the classroom is occupied.
- 2.6 Open-Door Counseling. Any counseling session with children, youth, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons shall be done in a high-traffic area within the church and in the presence of another adult, whenever possible. Where privacy is a concern, counseling shall be conducted in a room/office with a visible window and with another adult in view of the room. Counseling is permitted in public settings, such as restaurants and coffee shops, if it is in view of other adults. Home visits should not be conducted for children or youth without a parent/guardian present. Home visits should not be conducted with vulnerable or vulnerable elderly persons without 2 non-related and non-cohabitating adults present whenever possible. One-on-one counseling sessions between a volunteer or employee and a child, youth, vulnerable elderly person, or vulnerable person should be reported to the Ministry Area Supervisor prior to the session. In the event that the counseling session cannot be reported beforehand, it should be reported afterward to the Ministry Area Supervisor.
- 2.7 Restroom Assistance. Adults may assist children in the restroom where necessary. When the adult takes a child to the restroom, the door must remain ajar. When a child is taken to a restroom outside of a classroom, the adult must first check the restroom to be sure it is safe for them to enter. Diapering should be done in open, visible areas. Toddlers should have supervised independence in the restroom. Elementary-aged children and youth should have complete privacy in restrooms unless there is an emergency. Concerning vulnerable persons and the vulnerable elderly persons who need assistance, caregivers must be present at all times to provide restroom assistance.
- 2.8 Driving for Events. Only adult safe-sanctuaries qualified adults may drive children, youth, and/or vulnerable persons for an event, whether in church or personal vehicles. All drivers must provide a valid driver's license, proof of current insurance, and are required to consent to a Motor Vehicle Record check. A complete copy of Trinity's Medical Release and Liability Form will be on board for all passengers during transport. Exact copies will be kept in the office of either the Director of Discipleship, the Church Administrator, the Executive Pastor, or the Senior Pastor. Parents/guardians/caregivers will have contact information for each adult volunteer and employee on the trip. When only one vehicle is used for an event, the 2-adult rule applies. When several vehicles are taken for an event, keeping the other vehicles in sight, or caravanning, is an acceptable substitute for the 2 adult rule (para. 2.1). In this instance, there must be a minimum of 2 non-related or non-cohabitating children or youth in the vehicle, if not related to the driver. The number of persons per vehicle may not exceed the number of seatbelts, and all occupants must wear seatbelts when the vehicle is in motion. If the event requires the use of a church owned vehicle, the Church Vehicle Policy shall apply. For off-site events, youth may drive only themselves or siblings and must have

written parental permission submitted to the Ministry Area Supervisors. Under no circumstances may youth transport non-related or non-cohabitating children or youth.

- 2.9 Overnight Activities. Only safe-sanctuary-certified adults may supervise overnight activities for children or youth. All lodging, travel plans, and plans that include any exceptions to the previously stated procedures shall be provided in writing to parents and guardians. Trinity's Medical Release and Liability Form is required for participation. Regarding lodging, hotels (rooms open to an interior hallway) are preferred over motels (rooms open to the outside). Adults shall never share a bed with children or youth, including their own child, or be left alone with a child or youth in a room. Adults will be the same gender as those being chaperoned. In large dormitory room situations, 2 adults will be in the room.
- 2.10 Non-Trinity Overnights. Non-Trinity groups who stay overnight in Trinity's facilities shall sign a statement of agreement to comply with the ministry procedures outlined in section 2 of this policy. Any incidents occurring with an outside group shall be immediately reported to the Church Administrator or Senior Pastor.
- 2.11 Discipline. Corporal punishment of any kind shall never be allowed. Loving, verbal correction is encouraged. Physical restraint may be appropriate in the instance where the physical safety of a person is in question (i.e., a young child who might run into the parking lot). Volunteers shall consult their Ministry Area Supervisor when discipline problems disrupt normal activities. The Ministry Area Supervisor may ask volunteers to document in writing any discipline problems or actions taken in response that they may have witnessed. In instances where deemed appropriate, parents, guardians, and/or caretakers will be contacted.
- 2.12 Violations or Unwillingness to Comply. Any person violating or refusing to comply with all procedures outlined in this document shall not be allowed to work with children, youth, vulnerable persons, d/or vulnerable elderly persons at Trinity UMC.
- 2.13 Security Procedures. All children, youth, and vulnerable persons participating in any Trinity ministry event must have emergency contact and medical information on file with the Ministry Area Supervisor. Parents or guardians of children must personally sign their children in and out every time they are left in the care of Trinity's children's ministry. Written permission from parents or guardians must be given for a designee to sign children in and out. Youth may be allowed to sign themselves in/out. Sign-ins and outs must be time-stamped.
- 2.14 Alcohol/Tobacco/Drug Use. Anyone working with children, youth, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons will not be under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs and will refrain from using tobacco in their presence or on any Trinity property.

3.0 ONLINE MINISTRY PROCEDURES

- 3.1 Online contact. Any direct message, text message, conversation in the comment section, video call, phone call, or other contact on a personal computer or phone shall be considered an online contact.
- 3.2 Supervision Guidelines. The 2 adult rule (para. 2.1) and five-year rules (para. 2.4) are used even during online meetings and any interactions, including video contact.
- 3.3 Guardian Awareness. Parents, guardians, and/or caregivers must be notified of any online **video** meeting. In the case of one-on-one discussions, make sure parents, guardians, and/or caregivers are aware of and consent to the meeting and that they are with the child/youth/vulnerable person during the meeting. The same principle as open-door counseling (para. 2.6) shall apply to online one-on-one discussions.
- 3.4 One-on-one Interactions. Adults will avoid one-on-one interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable persons (i.e., texts, calls, etc.) whenever possible. Adults will attempt to move these interactions as quickly as possible into a group message, at a minimum including the Ministry Area Supervisor. If it is impossible to

move one-on-one interactions to group messages, Adults will report the interaction with screenshots or in writing to the Ministry Area Supervisor.

- 3.5 In App Communication. In-app direct messages and any digital communication that cannot be documented via screenshots between one minor or vulnerable person and one adult are prohibited (i.e., Snapchat, Instagram, etc).
- 3.6 Digital Platform Contact. Contact with children on any digital platform is prohibited. Employees and volunteers cannot contact youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable older adults on all digital platforms (i.e., social media, gaming, etc.). Connections on public platforms are permissible when initiated by the youth or vulnerable person (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). All private interactions are prohibited (i.e., direct messages). If contacted by a minor or a vulnerable person on any of these platforms, the adult should report the interaction to their Ministry Area Supervisor.
- 3.7 Posting Images on Digital Platforms. Employees and volunteers are prohibited from posting images of children, youth, and vulnerable persons they have taken at a Trinity event or on the Trinity campus on their personal social media accounts (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, etc). Photos of children, youth, vulnerable persons, or vulnerable elderly persons may be posted by Trinity UMC's social media accounts with written consent from parents, guardians, and/or caretakers, per Trinity's Medical Release and Liability Form. Youth helpers are also prohibited from posting images of children, youth, and vulnerable persons from Trinity events where they are volunteering on their personal social media accounts. Employees and volunteers, including youth helpers, are permitted to share posts made by Trinity's social media accounts on their personal accounts.
- 3.8 Documentation. Records of text-based communications between employees/volunteers and youth, children, or vulnerable persons shall be maintained, whether directly or by capturing conversation screenshots. The Ministry Area Supervisor shall report and document all video one-on-one interactions, including date, time, participants, and basic content.
- 3.9 Online Mandatory Reporting. Mandatory Reporting (para. 4.1) for all employees and volunteers includes information obtained through any online contact.

4.0 REPORTING PROCEDURES

- 4.1 Mandatory Reporting. Employees and volunteers will practice and advocate voluntary compliance with the Alabama statute on reporting of known or suspected abuse/neglect of children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons. Any person whose profession brings them in contact with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly persons on a daily basis is legally obligated to report signs of suspected abuse or neglect. Allegations of abuse/neglect will be reported to the Department of Human Resources or local law enforcement.
- 4.2 Clergy Confidentiality. Nothing in this policy is intended to call upon a pastor to violate the confidentiality of confession or clergy counseling relationships. Nonetheless, clergy are considered mandatory reporters under state law and must report known or suspected abuse unless disclosed within the confidentiality of confession or clergy relationships. However, pastors are permitted by law, and are encouraged, to report known or suspected cases of abuse or neglect even if the pastor learns of the abuse or neglect in the course of a confidential communication. Whenever possible, the pastor should alert a person of the pastor's obligation and commitment to report so that the person, during a counseling session or other confidential communication setting, may choose whether or not to share the information about the abuse or neglect with the pastor.
- 4.3 Verbal and Written Report. Any suspicions or incidents shall be reported by employees or volunteers to the Ministry Area Supervisor verbally and in writing, regardless of whether or not the instance may have occurred on the Trinity campus or at a Trinity-sponsored event. The written report shall then be delivered immediately to Trinity's Senior Pastor. If the Senior Pastor is not available, the report shall be given to one

of the Associate Pastors. Voice mails or emails without verbal acknowledgement from the Senior or Associate Pastor are not considered adequate notification.

- 4.4 Reporting of Actions to Guardians. The Senior Pastor or his/her designee shall immediately notify the custodial parent(s), legally appointed guardian(s), or caregiver(s) of the alleged victim to inform them of the incident unless the incident involves that person.
- 4.5 Reporting of Actions to Authorities. If the situation merits, the Senior Pastor or his/her designee shall forward reports to the appropriate authorities, including the Department of Human Resources and local law enforcement. Depending on the nature of the incident and the potential legal implications, the pastor or is/her designee shall contact Trinity UMC's legal counsel, as well as the Chair of Trinity's Board of Trustees, the church insurance carrier, and the District Superintendent of the Northeast District of the North Alabama Conference of the UMC.
- 4.6 Documentation of Reporting. The Senior Pastor or their designee will document in writing all steps taken in response to any suspicion or event reported.
- 4.7 Senior Pastor Involvement. If the Senior Pastor is implicated in the alleged incident, the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and one of the Associate Pastors shall receive the report. The Associate Pastor Who received the report shall then take on the role of the reporting designee. The Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee shall be informed of all steps taken by the Associate Pastor.
- 4.8 Notification. The Senior Pastor or his/her designee shall report to the person who made the original report what actions were taken about the report.

5.0 RESPONSE PROCEDURE

- 5.1 Suspension. All reasonable steps shall be taken immediately by the Ministry Area Supervisor or the Senior Pastor to ensure the alleged wrongdoer has no contact with the alleged victim and is barred from further work with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and/or vulnerable elderly persons at Trinity pending investigation.
- 5.2 Guidelines. A quick, compassionate, and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse and/or neglect is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. No employee or volunteer shall attempt to investigate or solve the problem independently. In all cases of reported or observed abuse and/or neglect, all involved parties, employees, and/or volunteers shall work in cooperation with all official investigating agencies.
- 5.3 Confidentiality. In consultation with appropriate legal and denominational Representatives, the chair of the Board of Trustees, and necessary employees, the Senior Pastor shall determine the proper response within the church and all required actions. In all instances, confidentiality shall be prioritized.
- 5.4 Media Response. The Senior Pastor, or their designee, is the only person authorized to make statements to media representatives. All media requests shall be forwarded to the Senior Pastor or their designee.

6.0 TRINITY CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

- 6.1 Procedure. Operational procedures for the Trinity Child Development Center shall be the Alabama Department of Human Resources' performance standards for licensed childcare centers.
- 6.2 Background Checks. Trinity Child Development Center will submit to the Department of Human Resources a request for clearance which includes the State Central Registry on Child Abuse/Neglect (DHR-DFC Form 1598), as well as an ABI and FBI background check for every employee, volunteer, and any person who is responsible for the care of the children. The results of the request for clearance shall be maintained in the individual's file in Trinity's Child Development Center.
- 6.3 Ratios. The Trinity Child Development Center's ratio shall comply with DHR Licensing.

6.4 Security. Security cameras, locked doors, keycard/keypad entry, clock-in/out procedure, and roaming supervisors are utilized for the safety of children in the Child Development Center. Access to the viewing and reviewing of the footage on the CCTV cameras shall be limited to authorized persons.

7.0 POLICY REVIEW AND REVISION

7.1 Safe Sanctuaries Team. A team of employees and volunteers will review any revisions to Trinity's Safe Sanctuaries Policy. The team will be comprised of the Executive Pastor, ~~the Director of Discipleship~~, the Director of Children's Ministry, the Director of Youth Ministries, and volunteer representatives who work closely with children, youth, vulnerable persons, and vulnerable elderly.

7.2 Policy Review/Revision Frequency. The ~~Executive Pastor Director of Discipleship~~ and the Safe Sanctuaries team will review the policy annually. If necessary, the ~~Executive Pastor Director of Discipleship~~ will update the policy, and the Safe Sanctuary Team will approve all updates.

In all instances when the applicable state and/or United Methodist Church reporting standards require additional actions, those actions shall supersede any procedures called out in this document.